CHAPTER 3 –REVISION TOPICS

Revision topics are broad categorizations of the significant issues that have been identified where resource conditions, technical knowledge, or public perceptions of resource management have created a potential "need for change." They have been identified through monitoring and evaluation, current science and assessments, and our daily contacts with the people who work in and recreate on our national forests.

This Chapter describes the seven Revision Topics, which are listed below:

1) **Vegetation**
2) **Fire Risk**
3) **Timber Production**
4) **Wildlife**
5) **Watersheds and Aquatic Species**
6) **Inventoried Roadless Areas and Proposed Wilderness Areas**
7) **Access and Recreation**

Each Revision Topic is described using the following outline and a more detailed description of the Historic and Current Conditions can be found in the AMS Technical Report:

- **Need for Change**
    - Describes how resource conditions have changed.
    - Describes the need to change Forest Plan direction.
- **Implications of Continuing under Current Management Direction**
    - Describes what would happen if we continue to manage under the 1987 Forest Plans.
    - Substantiates the need for change.
- **Possible Strategies in Revising Management Direction**

Complete literature citations and more technical information on each Revision Topic can be found in the AMS Technical Report.

Revision Topic – Vegetation

Need for Change:

Principles of biological diversity and landscape, fire, wildlife, and human ecology have advanced and are better understood since development of the 1987 Forest Plans. There is now an increased focus and scientific understanding of sustainability, disturbance processes, and vegetation management. The 1987 Forest Plans were generally focused on single resources, narrow in scope, and output-driven. Standards and guidelines were at times conflicting, with little recognition of the interrelationship of resources and the need to manage ecosystems at various scales. Management Areas (MA) tended to be small and fragmented. Most MAs fell under a timber-management emphasis, with silvicultural prescriptions that maximized growth and yield of timber. Resources other than timber were a constraint to the production of timber outputs. Although most MAs were defined generally along topographic features, they were not based on ecological systems.

Forest Plan monitoring, Geographic Area (GA) assessments, the Northern Region Overview, and the Interior Columbia River Basin Ecosystem Management Project (ICBEMP) have identified problems and demonstrate a need for change in maintaining terrestrial sustainability on NFS lands. Examples of findings from these documents include:

- A lack of early seral tree species (examples include ponderosa pine and western larch in the uplands, cottonwood in riparian areas, and blue wildrye in grasslands)
- An increased amount of shade-tolerant, fire intolerant, and insect and disease prone tree and shrub species dominating the landscape.
- Higher fuel loading resulting from decades of fire suppression
- A reduction in large snags on portions of the landscape.
- A decrease in interior habitat in late successional stands as a result of past timber harvest.

Fifteen years of implementation and monitoring of management activities also demonstrate a need to revise vegetation management direction. There have been extensive changes in vegetation type and size classes (e.g. western white pine, whitebark pine, ponderosa pine, western larch, aspen, cottonwood, some native forbs and grasses, snags, down wood) from historic ranges, which may increase the risk and uncertainty in managing for contributions towards ecological sustainability. Current management direction does not address these changes or provide tools for restoring these ecosystems. For further information on changes to vegetation, see the vegetation section of the AMS Technical Report (USDA 2003).

Disturbance processes, such as wildfire and insects and disease, have also changed from historic ranges. Increased tree density and fuel loading as a result of fire suppression has created stress on forests, resulting in increased insect and disease activity. This, in turn, has resulted in more intense wildfires over a greater land area than existed historically. In addition, there is an increase in the number of people living adjacent to and within the forests. This increase of population in the wildland-urban interface limits fire activity and creates a need to deal with acceptable fuel treatment options. Current management direction does not address these changes and the need for increased fuel treatments.

State Weed Management Plans (Idaho and Montana), forest plan monitoring, and assessments, indicate noxious weeds are increasing their infestation areas (USDA 1998a pg. 59, 1998b). Several new invaders have been found, indicating an increase in noxious weed diversity. The 1987 Forest Plans do not adequately cover weed management.

The listing of additional species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) since the 1987 Forest Plans were approved (e.g, water howellia, Ute ladies tresses, and Spalding's catchfly) also demonstrates the

need for updating Forest Plan direction for vegetation. The number of sensitive plants, as designated by the Regional Forester, has also increased dramatically since the 1987 Forest Plans (USDA, 1995b).

Management of late successional forests is an issue on many forest projects. Monitoring indicates both forests are meeting current direction for maintaining and providing for old growth conditions. There may be a need for change to develop revised goals, objectives, or standards for late successional forests to better reflect landscape scale issues related specifically to old growth conditions.

Implications of Continuing under Current Management Direction:

Effective fire suppression since the 1930s, the introduction of white pine blister rust, timber harvest, and the building of roads are the major causes of deviation from historic disturbance and vegetation patterns. These changes from historic conditions lead to further changes in disturbance and successional processes, making it difficult to provide for a sustainable ecosystem.

Some major changes as a result of past management, fire suppression, and implementation of the 1987 Forest Plans include:

1. In warm and dry habitats, there has been a shift from ponderosa pine and larch to Douglas-fir.
2. In moist habitats, there has been a shift from white pine and larch to Douglas-fir, grand fir, and hemlock.
3. There has been a decrease in the late-successional stage forests.
4. In general, patch sizes (uninterrupted blocks of forest) and interior habitat have decreased and fragmentation of the landscape has increased.
5. There has been an increase in shade-tolerant, drought-intolerant tree species.

Under current management direction, these changes would continue to occur, adding to a cycle of changed conditions from historic and resulting in a reduced ability to contribute towards the ecological component of sustainability. For further information on changes from historic ranges and implications of current management direction, see the vegetation section of the AMS Technical Report (USDA, 2003).

Possible Strategies in Revising Management Direction for Vegetation:

- Define the desired conditions for contribution of National Forest System (NFS) lands to terrestrial ecosystem sustainability at appropriate temporal and spatial scales.
- Develop management direction based on an understanding and consideration of natural disturbance processes, including the intensity, frequency, and magnitude of those disturbance regimes.
- Develop restoration strategies that will move structure, composition, and function of landscapes, communities, and individuals toward sustainability objectives.
- Develop a strategy for aggressively treating noxious weed populations through various means, including mechanical, biological, and chemical control.
- Develop a monitoring strategy that will measure appropriate indicators of ecological sustainability at multiple scales and will serve to facilitate adaptive management.

Revision Topic – Fire Risk

Need for Change:

Since the Forest Plans were approved in 1987, more homes and other structures have been built near and around national forests. Should fires occur, these structures within the wildland-urban interface are very vulnerable. As people, homes, and structures continue to occupy the wildland-urban interface and as hazard fuels continue to accumulate, a high risk and volatile situation needs to be addressed. There is a need for change in the 1987 Forest Plans to better address the restoration of fire-adapted ecosystems (refer to the Vegetation section of this document) and the reduction of risk to communities and the environment. The 1987 Forest Plans do not adequately address this issue.

Since the 1987 Forest Plans were written, much has been learned about the role fire plays as a disturbance process in western forest ecosystems. Fire suppression has changed the vegetation patterns, structure, and composition of forests. Therefore, the role that fire plays in these ecosystems has also been altered. The altered forest composition, when coupled with the additional structures and communities in the urban interface results in changed conditions that need to be addressed in the revision of the Forest Plans.

National and Regional strategies describe fire risk conditions in terms of condition class and fire regime. The 1987 Forest Plans did not address fire management from this perspective. Therefore, there is a need to update the 1987 Forest Plans so they reflect national fire management strategies and policies completed in recent years. These strategies include:

- The 1995 Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy and Program Review: This review directs the integration of fire into land management planning, working with landowners and stakeholders, and directs landscape level analysis (USDA/USDI, 1995c).
- National Fire Plan (2000): The documents that make up the National Fire Plan (NFP) direct that Fire Management Plans are more closely linked to Forest Plan direction.
- Region 1 and Region 4 Fire Planning Framework (2000): This provides fire management direction for Forest Plan Revisions that will help meet NEPA compliance in implementing wildland fire use, provides planning consistency across geographic areas, and other plan revision efficiencies (USDA 2000d).
- 10-Year Comprehensive Strategy (2001): This strategy reflects views of a broad cross-section of governmental and non-governmental stakeholders. The strategy addresses a comprehensive approach to the management of wildland fire, hazardous fuels, and ecosystem restoration on Federal and adjacent State, tribal, and private forest and range in the United States (USDA 2001a).

Implications of Continuing under Current Management Direction:

Under the 1987 Forest Plans, each Management Area (MA) lists standards for fire, which includes both prescribed fire and wildfire. These standards are still relevant even with the new, standard terminology now in use. Existing MA's developed during the 1980's produced small, impractical areas for wildland fire use and for fire management prescription writing. Strategic decisions developed during the Forest Plan Revision should provide general fire management direction. The MA's in the 1987 Forest Plans have made integrated fire management difficult to implement. The 1987 Forest Plans have not provided sufficient analysis and, therefore, have not adequately authorized wildland fire use. Because of this, the only management choice available with an unwanted fire is to respond with suppression tactics.

Possible Strategies in Revising Management Direction for Fire Risk:

- Develop Fire Management Units (FMU's) consistent with Land and Resource Management Plans (LRMP) that identify appropriate management response strategies for each unit.

- List strategic measurable management objectives specific to each FMU.

- List management constraints or decision criteria that will impact fire management activities within each FMU.

- Establish monitoring and evaluation programs and measures in Forest Plan Revisions for restoration activities in fire-adapted ecosystems.

Revision Topic - Timber Production

Need for Change:

The 1987 Forest Plans established allowable sale quantities (ASQ) as the maximum level of timber that could be harvested. The timber production levels have been well below the ASQ for both the KNF and IPNFs. The Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) of the 1987 Forest Plans has found that levels of timber volume sold have declined substantially over the past 14 years of implementation.

> IPNFs: The Idaho Panhandle 1987 Forest Plan projected a total maximum timber sell volume of 280 mmbf annually in the first decade. Timber sell volumes have decreased from 246.4 mmbf in 1988 to 40.7 mmbf in 2001.
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> KNF: The Kootenai 1987 Forest Plan projected a total maximum timber sell volume of 227 mmbf annually in the first decade. In addition, timber sell volume from unsuitable management areas was estimated at 60 mmbf, averaging 6 mmbf per year. M&E Reports indicate that sell volumes have declined from a high of 200 mmbf per year in 1992 to 52.2 mmbf per year in 2001.

Many factors have influenced the timber production levels. On the KNF, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) amended the biological opinions for grizzly bear recovery in July 1995 and changed how recovery processes would take place on the forest. The INFISH Decision of July 1995 resulted in additional streamside protection measures on both the KNF and IPNFs. In general, it has become more difficult to plan and execute sales due to public controversy, protection of threatened and endangered species habitat, inability to enter inventoried roadless areas, water quality concerns, and reduction in forest budgets (USDA 2002b, 2002c).

While timber harvest levels have not exceeded the maximums established in the ASQ, they have also not met expectations for management and output levels. Even though ASQ is the maximum harvest level, there was an expectation by the public that this level was achievable and predicted. The analysis conducted for the 1987 Forest Plan used this level of harvest in estimating affects from timber management on other resources and on local jobs and income. With the reduced timber harvest level, there is a need to update the predicted timber harvest level and estimate the effects on other resources and local communities.

The management direction in the 1987 Forest Plans emphasized the production of timber, with the majority of management areas allowing or promoting timber management. In the 1990s, the Forest Service began to shift its focus and mission towards ecosystem management and ecological sustainability. This change in policy and direction resulted in a decreased emphasis on commercial timber production and an increased emphasis on timber production as a tool for restoration or as a means to address other resource requirements or needs. However, budget allocation and targets remain largely tied to commercial timber production. There is a need to reanalyze timber harvest levels and revise direction to address this change in management.

In addition, evaluation of timber suitability is required to be reviewed every 10-15 years (36 CFR 219.14). Since the adoption of the 1987 Forest Plans, many changes to timber suitability have occurred, including changed Forest Service handbook direction (FSH 2409.13). See the AMS Technical Report for additional information (USDA 2003).

Many conditions affecting timber demand have also changed since the 1987 Forest Plans were developed. Timber harvest from private, state, and NFS lands have declined; imports of wood products have increased; and technology for manufacture of wood products and mill capacity has changed. In addition, with an increased concern on managing for forest health, there is the potential to increase the supply of small-diameter stumpage from NFS lands. Because of these changed conditions and the need to understand market conditions for small-diameter wood products, the demand for wood fiber production

will be determined as part of the analysis for the DEIS. See the AMS Technical Report for additional information (USDA 2003).

Implications of Continuing under Current Management Direction:

Based on historic and current condition and trends, timber harvest levels will continue to be well below the ASQ and fall short of expectations. Direction to maximize growth and yield through short rotations, a high use of regeneration harvest, and intensive timber management is unattainable because of other resource management constraints and public values. The 1987 Forest Plans emphasize timber production, overlooking ecosystem management and principles of ecological sustainability. Suitable timberlands will continue to be adjusted to make corrections to the 1987 Forest Plans. Little will be known regarding the market for small-diameter logs, limiting the forests' ability to manage for improved forest health through commercial timber sales.

Possible Strategies in Revising Management Direction for Timber Production:

- Further define the role of timber harvest as a tool to achieve desired future condition.
- Identify acres suitable for timber production.
- Estimate expected timber sale volume. Estimate the jobs and income generated by these levels of production and use and their contribution to local communities.
- Incorporate the social and cultural values into the alternative development and desired future conditions.
- Develop a monitoring strategy.

Revision Topic – Wildlife

Need for Change:

Since the 1987 Forest Plans, several changes have occurred that resulted in subsequent modifications in how we manage both species and habitats. The proposed revised Forest Plans need to address these changes.

Species listed as threatened and endangered have changed. Changes to the terrestrial wildlife species list include removing the peregrine falcon and adding Canada lynx. Additionally, the sensitive species list was amended in 1999 with the addition of eight species and the removal of one (USDA 1999b). Standards for habitat management for grizzly bear continued to evolve (USDI FWS 1998) and Forest Plans were amended in 1999 to include incidental take. Additional amendments associated with motorized access management were developed in 2002 and will be incorporated into revised Forest Plans (USDA 2002d). Habitat and access management for lynx and caribou continue to evolve.

New and/or updated laws, regulations, and management strategies contain additional measures for managing habitats at a much broader scale. Items such as fragmentation, patch size, biodiversity and ecosystem management strategies evolved and need to be incorporated into Forest Plans. The Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project (USDA/USDI 1999c) identified that current plan direction for special habitats such as snags and down woody material may not be adequate for species dependent on those habitats. In 2001 it was determined that the Migratory Bird Treaty Act applied to all federal agencies. That decision makes it unlawful "by any means or manner, to pursue, hunt, take, capture or kill" any migratory bird. The State of Montana completed an elk management plan in 1992 with specific habitat and population goals and objectives that did not always match those found in the Forest Plan (MFWP 1992). The USFWS is identifying critical habitat for caribou with specific management strategies.

Vegetation and roads analyses done in preparation for the Forest Plan revisions show that physical and biological components of terrestrial wildlife habitats have changed, and these changes must be recognized. These changes have resulted in increased or decreased suitable habitat, depending on the wildlife species and are listed below. The 1987 Forest Plans need to be revised to provide restoration strategies for these habitats.

- Reductions in early and late succession habitats (USDA 1998b)
- Loss of fire-killed trees, large snags and down wood.
- Significant reductions of western white pine, white-bark pine, western larch, sub-alpine larch, and ponderosa pine forest cover types (USDA 1998b).
- Increases in the extent of Douglas-fir and grand fir, and cedar/hemlock on the IPNFs.
- Increases in the density of trees and a shift to a largely mid-seral structural stage.
- Reduction in riparian, wetland and lakeshore habitat (due to road construction and development) and vegetation composition changes in riparian areas (due to noxious weeds).
- Changes in vegetative composition on big game winter ranges due to noxious weed encroachment (USDA 2000a).

For additional information see the wildlife portion of the AMS Technical Report (USDA 2003).

Implications of Continuing under Current Management Direction:

The KNF and IPNFs Forest Plans were signed in 1987 and since that time research has shown that certain forest cover types are not as well represented as they were historically. Additionally, there has been a shift from late and early successional forest to a more uniform mid-successional forest. The size of

uninterrupted blocks of forest (patch size) is smaller than it was historically. Each of these forests' characteristics contributes to an areas ability to serve as wildlife habitat. The documented changes increase suitable habitat for some species (for example: white-tailed deer, American robin, black bear) and decrease suitable habitat for others (for example: Canada lynx, white-headed woodpecker, flammulated owl). Many of the species listed as sensitive or management indicators under the current Forest Plans require special habitats. Current plan direction and/or loss of those habitats may be inadequate to protect species dependent on those habitats.

Since 1987, our understanding of the impacts of roads and noxious weeds has increased. The transportation system on NFS lands impacts suitable habitat in many ways. Roads remove fertile land from production, provide access for the public, and facilitate the extraction of natural resources. Each of these characteristics of roads has costs and benefits to different wildlife species. One of the areas where new direction is required is access management. Demands on access to public lands have increased dramatically over the past two decades, well above those anticipated in 1987 Forest Plans. The 1987 Forest Plans do not contain adequate management strategies for snowmobiling in lynx, wolverine, or bog lemming habitat, off road vehicle use, or providing adequate security levels for big game. The impacts of noxious weeds to wildlife habitat have only recently begun to be appreciated. Weed infestations have reduced the ability of many winter ranges on the KIPZ to support big game. Dry upland sites appear to be especially susceptible to weeds. Noxious weeds do not provide the forage value to wildlife that native plants provide.

The revised Forest Plans need to be in compliance with new laws, regulations, and management direction. Forest Plans also need to incorporate new research and science that has been developed. The new strategies have been developed to aid in the sustainability of all native and desired non-native species.

The 1987 Forest Plan direction appears to be adequate for species like the gray wolf, bald eagle, and peregrine falcon. Recovery goals are being met for each of these species. Not enough information is available for species such as lynx (which were only recently listed) or for species currently listed as sensitive, such as harlequin duck and wolverine.

Management direction for several sensitive species will need to be addressed in Forest Plan revision. Species have been added and deleted from this list over the past two decades as new information is gathered. Current information is not adequate to determine trends of any kind for these species. This is often a case of inadequate funding to conduct a proper monitoring program, however fifteen years of plan implementation has often resulted in an "inconclusive" determination for several of the items in monitoring plans.

Over the past two decades there have been many changes in management strategies including biodiversity, ecosystem management, fragmentation, sustainability, viability, and linkage zones to name a few. Management strategies for grizzly bear have continued to evolve, and have only recently been developed for lynx. They may continue to evolve with the development of a recovery plan for lynx and for additional species that may be listed in the future. State agencies have developed elk management plans and habitat components such as security and vulnerability have evolved. The 1987 Forest Plans may not fully reflect all of these new strategies.

Hunting, fishing, wildlife viewing, and recreational pursuits (hiking, biking etc) are important components that make up the quality of life for residents of the KIPZ. Socially, it is the availability of these and many other activities associated with the area, that has and continues to attract people to the area. They are also important economically to all of the local communities. The area attracts residents of adjacent large cities such as Spokane and Kalispell but also non-residents that don't have these opportunities elsewhere. Providing adequate populations of all wildlife species has become very important as the demand for these activities has increased. NFS lands must provide habitat to meet the needs of all of these wildlife species.

Possible Strategies in Revising Management Direction for Wildlife:

- Develop strategies that maintain conditions necessary to support population viability for all native and desired non-native species. This includes restoration of those habitats that are outside the historic range of variability such as old growth ponderosa pine. Review and update the MIS list or develop new management indicators.
- Develop a monitoring strategy, for multiple scales, that tracks the effects of management activities on management indicators and that will serve to facilitate adaptive management.
- Define the desired conditions for contribution of NFS lands to terrestrial ecosystem sustainability for appropriate temporal and spatial scales.
- Develop appropriate geographic scales of analysis (management areas, geographic areas etc.) with attainable standards and goals.

Revision Topic – Watersheds and Aquatic Species

Need for Change:

There are two primary reasons that the 1987 Forest Plans need to be revised for watershed and aquatic resources. The first is to establish a set of management directions that recognizes and emphasizes watershed restoration activities. Current scientific findings, Forest Service policies and direction, and priorities from other agencies that manage water resources need to be brought together to construct strategies for watershed activities. This is supported by the following findings:

- The 1987 Forest Plans have a watershed management strategy that can be described as "maintenance rather than restoration". In some situations, thresholds, or "minimum impact" standards define the criteria for maintenance. Taken as a system of strategies and programs, current direction is not designed to restore damaged water resources or watershed systems, or to protect those that were not impaired.
- In 1995, the Forest Plans were amended to include the Inland Native Fish Strategy (INFISH; USDA 1995d). Implementation of INFISH gave greater protection to aquatic resources, especially riparian-dependent systems. INFISH was intended to be an interim measure to maintain and protect aquatic resources until a long-term strategy could be developed. This longer-term strategy will be developed in the proposed revised Forest Plans.
- There are conflicting priorities for very limited restoration funds. Forest Service, USFWS, and State Departments of Environmental Quality have different restoration priorities.

The second need to revise the 1987 Forest Plans is to address physical and biological components of watershed systems that have changed. Such changes include:

- Approximately 168 stream segments or water bodies have been listed by the states of Idaho and Montana as impaired under section 303d of the Clean Water Act.
- Approximately 25% of the watersheds on each forest appear to be in a "Not-Properly-Functioning" condition, and additionally, nearly half are "Functioning-at-Risk".
- There are six fish species and three amphibian species on the forests that are listed as threatened or endangered under ESA, or as sensitive by the Regional Forester (USDI 2002, USDA 1999b).

Implications of Continuing under Current Management Direction:

Legacy effects from past timber harvest, mining, and other human-caused disturbances continue to effect watershed condition and health. The 1987 Forest Plan direction, as amended by INFISH (USDA 1995d), reduces the risk to watersheds and aquatic biota from new and ongoing activities. For some resources, INFISH standards and guidelines contain general direction for repairing past damage (roads, grazing, recreation), although it is lacking for other resources (timber harvest, mining). Generally, under the direction of the 1987 Forest Plans, the intensity and the risks associated with new and ongoing developments and man-induced disturbances has been and will be greatly reduced as compared to the last several decades. However, they are likely to continue to accumulate, and the press-nature of those disturbances still exists.

The extent and distribution of legacy disturbances is not likely to be effectively reduced on a watershed scale. Certainly, there will continue to be local improvements; but watershed-scale improvements will progress slowly and perhaps haphazardly. Without specific direction and emphasis in the Forest Plan, watershed restoration may tend to be prioritized and directed by more visible developmental and commodity-based resource decisions.

Current condition and trends show that native aquatic species are in decline. Land management practices, particularly historic practices, while not the only cause (introduction of non-native species, influence of hatchery fish, and harvest are other contributing causes), have had major influences. Under the current direction, some areas will likely see a slow improving trend, others will continue to chronically degrade, and the viability of native species will continue to be at risk.

Possible Strategies in Revising Management Direction for Watersheds and Aquatic Species:

- Develop strategies that maintain conditions necessary to support population viability of aquatic species.
- Provide strategies that maintain the conditions and water quality of watersheds that are "properly functioning" and are fully supporting beneficial uses, including aquatic biota and salmonid spawning.
- Provide strategies that will restore watershed conditions and water quality in "not-properly-functioning," and "functioning-at-risk" watersheds adequately to fully support beneficial uses. Develop strategies that will protect, and where feasible, recover native aquatic and riparian dependent species and prevent the introduction and spread of undesirable non-native aquatic species.
- Work collaboratively with EPA, state water quality bureaus, USFWS, the public, and other interested parties to prioritize watersheds for restoration.
- Evaluate INFISH interim strategy for possible modifications.
- Facilitate TMDL implementation plans and schedules with the States.
- Develop monitoring strategies that will measure appropriate trends and indicators related to aquatic sustainability.

Revision Topic – Inventoried Roadless Areas and Proposed Wilderness Areas

Need for Change:

This subject is a Revision Topic because of the continuing controversy associated with the management of Inventoried Roadless Areas (IRAs) and proposed Wilderness Areas, and because roadless areas cover a large part of the two forests. Within KIPZ, there are 91 IRAs totaling almost 1.5 million acres – 1/3 of the KIPZ.

The 1987 Forest Plans contain differences in the detail of direction provided for proposed Wilderness Areas. Management Area designations are quite different between the two forests. The IPNFs Forest Plan combines the proposed and established Wilderness Areas, while the KNF Forest Plan separates the existing Wilderness areas from those Proposed for Wilderness designation. In general, the KNF Forest Plan provides more management direction for those areas proposed for Wilderness designation than the IPNFs Forest Plan provides. The guidance provided in both 1987 Forest Plans needs to be updated to reflect current direction for these proposed areas. This guidance needs to be specific for proposed Wilderness Areas.

There is a need to revise the 1987 Forest Plans so that they reflect current Forest Service direction on roadless area management. At this time, that direction is found in what is commonly referred to as "the Roadless Area Conservation Rule" (USDA 2000e), a national effort by the Forest Service to examine and set management direction for roadless areas. Key points (in chronological order) include:

- On January 12, 2001, the Roadless Area Conservation Rule was published in the Federal Register (FR Doc. 01-17249). This rule prohibits road construction, road re-construction, and timber harvest in IRAs on NFS Lands. The intent of this rule is to provide lasting protection for IRAs within the NFS in the context of multiple use management (Federal Register, 2001).
- On May 10, 2001, the U. S. District Court for the District of Idaho enjoined the USDA from implementing the Roadless Area Conservation Rule. This decision by the District Court was appealed to the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit.
- On June 7, 2001, the Chief of the Forest Service and Secretary of Agriculture issued a letter concerning interim protection of IRAs, stating "the Forest Service is committed to protecting and managing roadless areas as an important component of the NFS. The best way to achieve this objective is to ensure that we protect and sustain roadless values until they can be appropriately considered through forest planning". (Bosworth 2001)
- On December 12, 2002 the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals reversed the May 10, 2001 ruling by the U. S. District Court that had enjoined USDA from implementing the Roadless Area Conservation Rule. At this time, the Court is still considering a rehearing request. They have not yet issued a mandate to lift the injunction, therefore the Forest Service remains enjoined from implementing the Roadless Area Conservation Rule. As long as the Roadless Area Conservation Rule is not in effect, the agency policy for the protection and management of Inventoried Roadless Areas is contained in Interim Direction at Forest Service Manual (FSM) 1925.

IRAs are defined as "Undeveloped areas typically exceeding 5,000 acres that met the minimum criteria for wilderness consideration under the Wilderness Act and that were inventoried during the Forest Service's Roadless Area Review and Evaluation (RARE II) process, subsequent assessments, or forest planning. These areas are identified in a set of inventoried roadless area maps, contained in Forest Service Roadless Area Conservation, Final Environmental Impact Statement, Volume 2, dated November, 2000, which are held at the National Headquarters of the Forest Service, or any update, correction, or revision of those maps." (USDA 2000e)

Implications of Continuing under Current Management Direction:

Direction in the 1987 Forest Plans included guidance to manage some of the IRAs for resources that would preclude roadless management. Direction included proposed development in some of the IRAs for timber management. The projected amounts of timber harvest and road construction from these areas has not occurred. Continuing under 1987 Forest Plan direction would perpetuate this situation, and the desired goals and objectives as stated in the 1987 Forest Plans would not be met for those areas. This direction does not reflect the current national policy for the management of IRAs and needs to be revised.

The revised Forest Plans will evaluate each of the 91 IRAs on the KIPZ and recommend management options depending upon current national direction that continues to evolve and change. Currently, we are unable to implement the Roadless Area Conservation Rule because of remaining legal issues. The Forest Service has established interim guidance for the management of IRAs to ensure that these areas are protected until the current legal issues are resolved and national guidance is finalized. Until that time, we will continue to evaluate these roadless areas through our Forest Plan Revision Process.

Possible Strategies in Revising Management Direction for Inventoried Roadless Areas and Proposed Wilderness Areas:

- Analyze IRAs for wilderness potential and recommend appropriate IRAs for wilderness designation. Define desired conditions for all IRAs recommended for wilderness designation.
- Recommend management area prescriptions for IRAs not recommended for wilderness designation. Provide desired condition descriptions for management areas that include IRAs.
- Develop monitoring strategies for IRAs.

Revision Topic – Access and Recreation

Need for Change:

Access to NFS lands is one of the most controversial topics, both internally and externally, in forest management today. Because of the level of this controversy, it is appropriate to address Access and Travel Management as part of Forest Plan Revision. Public dissatisfaction with current direction and policies is apparent in both the media coverage that is devoted to it, and in the public meetings that are held on a regular basis across both forests. This dissatisfaction is evident on both sides of the controversy. That is, there are some groups that advocate that access to NFS lands is much too limited, both in where people can go and how they get there, and there are groups that advocate that there are not enough restrictions on where people can go and how they get there.

The 1987 Forest Plans do not provide adequate direction to address the changes in recreation demands and technology and shifts in management practices that have occurred over the last fifteen years. Forest Plan Revision provides the opportunity to address these changes and some of the changes that have occurred are as follows:

- Increased user demand over the last fifteen years. Since the 1987 Forest Plans were developed, motorized and non-motorized modes of travel have increased and diversified. In the case of the IPNFs, communities like Spokane, Coeur d'Alene and Sandpoint have experienced significant population growth. For the KNF, areas like the Flathead Valley and Missoula areas have grown. This growth in population has resulted in an increase in the numbers and types of users of NFS lands. Roads that were originally constructed and used for timber harvest are now predominantly used for recreation purposes, and resource protection and restoration.

- Technological advancements in recreational equipment has resulted in forest users accessing areas that were not accessible fifteen years ago and pursuing recreational activities in ways that were not possible historically. Motorized vehicles, such as snowmobiles and ATVs, can access areas much further into the forest than they could historically.

- Changes in logging system technology and feasibility have advanced and the need for high-density road systems is no longer a critical factor for harvest activities. Changes in financial resources have limited our ability to adequately maintain the existing road systems on the forest's. The National Fire Plan and a shift in fire management have changed how access is considered. Weed control and eradication has emerged in the last decade as a prominent factor to consider in terms of access on NFS lands.

- One of the more controversial changes has been the miles of roads that have been put into restricted status. In order to meet wildlife habitat needs, NFS roads have been put into restricted status at a faster rate and over a shorter period of time, than was estimated in the 1987 Forest Plans.

- The need for watershed restoration work and the means to meet those needs was not addressed in the 1987 Forest Plans. This has led to the method of re-contouring roads as a means of decommissioning.

- In January of 2001, a new Forest Roads Rule and Policy was issued which revised regulations concerning the management, use, and maintenance of the National Forest Transportation System. Forest Plan Revision provides the opportunity to incorporate this direction into the Forest Plans (USDA 2001b).

Based on these changed conditions there is a need to better integrate social needs and resource management directions with access management.

Implications of Continuing under Current Management Direction:

Roads will continue to be managed to meet legal requirements. Watershed restoration projects will result in continuing decommissioning of roads. Wildlife security will be attained through the use of road restrictions. Under-maintained roads will continue to deteriorate and long-term economic and resource risks will increase. Many site-specific amendments may be required to deal with travel management. User expectations will not be met and dissatisfaction will continue to escalate.

Expectations for dispersed recreation users are not likely to be met. In some dispersed areas across the KIPZ (primarily river corridors and lands adjacent to lakes), overuse and resource degradation continues to occur due to the lack of proper facilities and transportation systems. Various groups will continue to advocate their interests and controversy is likely to continue. Unplanned and unmanaged uses will evolve and generate new areas of unresolved conflict.

Developed recreation sites are likely to meet the expectations of most users. Legally required health and safety issues will be met. Minimal funding for recreation site maintenance continues to be a problem and will intensify if the Fee Demonstration Program disappears.

Possible Strategies in Revising Management Direction for Access and Recreation:

- Provide management direction for Access and Travel Management Planning, including criteria for developing access strategies by appropriate modes and season of use.
- Review and re-evaluate Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) classifications.
- Determine the appropriate classifications of ROS for both summer and winter uses.
- Propose management direction for dispersed recreation areas across the KIPZ.
- Establish uniform Access and Travel Management guidelines for protecting the wilderness character of Wilderness Study Areas and Recommended Wilderness.
- Establish uniform, specific access and travel monitoring requirements (summer and winter).
- Establish off-highway vehicle (OHV) direction for the IPNFs.
- Incorporate Forest-scale Roads Analysis in Alternative development.